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SUBJECT: FRENCH AF DAS DISCUSSES SUDAN (AMIS/UN), DJIBOUTI  
(BILATERAL RELATIONS), DRC (POSSIBLE EU FORCE)

REF: A. PARIS 1721

[1](#)B. DJIBOUTI 338

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt, reasons  
1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Helen Le Gal, MFA DAS-equivalent for East and Central Africa, on March 20 said that France would take a low-key approach to lobbying Africans on the AMIS/UN issue, to avoid exacerbating anti-Western phobias. She stressed the importance of progress in the Abuja talks. An official from the MFA's IO bureau said that IO A/S-equivalent Sylvie Berman was presently in the Republic of the Congo and would push for support of the UN mission during her talks with Congolese officials. On Djibouti, Le Gal said that bilateral relations were returning to normal, and noted the recently concluded Partnership Framework projecting French cooperation assistance to Djibouti over the next five years. On the possible new EU mission for the DRC, Le Gal said that France was comfortable with the way the mission was shaping up, hoped that deployment would not be necessary, and commented on the care that Germany, as lead nation, would have to take in establishing the mission in view of German domestic concerns. END SUMMARY,

SUDAN

[1](#)2. (C) Following our discussions March 17 with MFA AF PDAS-equivalent Barbier and IO DAS-equivalent Simon-Michel on Sudan (ref A), we met with DAS-equivalent for East and Central Africa Helene Le Gal on March 20. Le Gal began by stressing France's complete agreement with the U.S. on the desirability of transforming AMIS into a UN operation. She noted the Sudanese government's strong opposition to this plan and the anti-Western rhetoric it was employing. Prior to the March 10 AU decision on this issue, Le Gal said that France had discussed the matter with a range of countries but had lobbied Libya and Egypt the most strenuously. She said that the latter, in particular, had been visiting the MFA "several times a week," announcing positions very similar to Sudan's in opposing a "Western" intervention via a UN operation.

[1](#)3. (C) Asked about the GOF's lobbying after March 10, Le Gal said that France was considering how best to approach other countries. She said, however, that France was likely to take a much lower-key approach than the U.S. was taking. Although not critical of the U.S. effort, Le Gal said that the GOF believed that most African countries concerned with the Sudan/AMIS/UN issue understood the realities and seemed able to see through Sudan's rhetoric. She said that an aggressive approach on France's part might alienate some

Africans and give credence to Sudan's warnings that a UN operation represented a Western intrusion and imposed solution. That said, Le Gal indicated that France would not hesitate to express its views when discussing Sudan with other interlocutors.

14. (C) Le Gal lauded the March 10 AU communique, noting that the AU had not succumbed to Sudan's pressure. She stressed the importance of progress in the Abuja talks and remarked that the GOF had enhanced its presence in Abuja to observe the talks. She noted with approval the presence of representatives on the rebel side who had not previously engaged in the talks, which was a positive development. Le Gal also found Sudanese VP Taha's renewed engagement positive, commenting favorably on his recent discussion in Brussels with EU Foreign Policy chief Solana, and on a recent meeting he held in Tripoli that included rebel leaders. This was promising, after several months when Taha seemed to have disappeared from active involvement.

15. (C) A "window of opportunity" now existed for Sudan, Le Gal observed, not just in terms of the UN issue but in the Abuja process as well. She hoped that both sides would make the most of this opportunity. Le Gal noted in closing that a UN mission in Darfur might not be a simple matter, however. Unlike other cases where the UN intervened in a weak or failed state, Sudan had a strong central government that was capable of making life difficult for UN peacekeepers if it chose to do so.

16. (C) In a separate conversation on March 20, Benoit Guidee of the MFA's IO bureau, following up on our March 17 demarche (ref A), said that IO A/S-equivalent Sylvie Berman was presently in the Republic of the Congo and would ask for

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Congolese support for the UN mission in her talks in Brazzaville.

DJIBOUTI

17. (C) Le Gal described relations with Djibouti as "returning to a normal state" after a difficult period complicated by the Borrel affair. (NOTE: French judge Borrel died in Djibouti in 1995; his widow, in an attempt to overturn the finding that the judge's death was a suicide, has instigated legal action that has included efforts to obtain the testimony of high-ranking Djibouti officials, which the Djiboutian side has strongly opposed. END NOTE.) Le Gal said that Djibouti FM Mahmoud Ali Youssef's February 28-March 1 visit to France (ref B) was a success.

18. (C) The bilateral cooperation agreement France signed with Djibouti during the Foreign Minister's visit took the form of a Partnership Framework, Le Gal said. The GOF would henceforth be trying to put all of its foreign assistance and cooperation agreements in the form of such a Partnership Framework, and the one with Djibouti was only the fifth one that had been concluded. The other agreements were with Cambodia, Benin, Gabon, and Ghana. The agreement with Djibouti included a repackaging of older commitments and some new ones, Le Gal explained, and covered high and low projections of assistance that could be provided by France within the next five years.

19. (C) On the Borrel affair, Le Gal said that the case had hampered relations for a good part of 2005, partly because the Djiboutians had trouble accepting that the French judiciary, which was conducting investigations prompted by Mrs. Borrel's legal action, was by law completely independent of the executive branches of the GOF, including the MFA. The GOF had repeatedly explained this to Djiboutian officials and over time they came to understand and accept the concept, however grudgingly. Le Gal noted that during the Djiboutian Foreign Minister's visit to France, neither side mentioned the Borrel case at all. She indicated that both sides, while

not forgetting about the case, were doing their best to work around it and not let it hinder relations.

#### EU MISSION TO DRC

¶10. (C) Le Gal said that the GOF had no problems with the way the proposed EU mission to bolster security during the DRC's June elections has been developing, although she noted that the project was not yet finalized. She said that France of course hoped that deploying the force would not be necessary. The UN had initiated EU thinking when it requested EU engagement in the DRC regarding the elections. First steps had included a study of the matter and how to divide the work. Le Gal said that the EU force, if engaged, would likely operate in Kinshasa and the western part of the DRC, in view of the fact that 80 percent of MONUC was deployed in the east.

¶11. (C) Le Gal said that the operation's headquarters would be in Potsdam under German leadership and that France, with Belgian participation, would likely take the lead in operating a forward headquarters in the DRC. She mentioned that troops could stage at French bases in Gabon prior to deployment in the DRC. Le Gal said that France and Germany had agreed on a tripartite division of forces, with 1/3 German, 1/3 French, and 1/3 other EU. Le Gal said that Sweden and Poland, in addition to Belgium, were considering troop contributions. She noted that the UK and Italy had signaled that they would not provide troops. EU Foreign Policy chief Solana traveled to the DRC to meet with DRC officials and would be reporting back to the EU this week.

¶12. (C) Given that Germany would be leading the operation, Le Gal predicted that it would have to be more carefully planned and put in place than might be the case if France were taking the lead. The Germans would have to explain the matter thoroughly to the Bundestag and to other domestic political constituencies concerned with German out-of-area military deployments, and cross every "t" and dot every "i" in terms of obtaining UNSC approval. Asked who would decide whether to deploy the operation, Le Gal said that the decision would be the EU's, taking into account the perceived need for deployment based on the views of concerned parties. Le Gal said that any decision to deploy the EU force would likely require UNSC authorization.

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